

Proposal to Establish a School Federation

Incorporating Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools

Consultation Document



Caerphilly County Borough Council

Governing Body, Bedwas Junior School

Governing Body, Rhydri Primary School

September 2018

FOREWORD

Both Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools have worked on a collaborative basis since 2014 and have shared a headteacher.

This collaborative approach continues to impact positively on both schools.

This arrangement is fully supported by the Local Authority (Caerphilly County Borough Council).

The Governors and Local Authority are working in partnership to establish a formal federated arrangement for both schools for the future.

Whilst both schools will continue to have their individual identities as regards name and continue to manage their own budgets, the process involves establishing a single governing body.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is responsible for promoting high educational standards and for delivering efficient primary and secondary education. Having effective leaders in our schools is considered central to this and is a challenge facing councils across Wales.

This consultation document sets out the case for a change to the leadership and governance arrangements at Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools.

The main purpose of this document is to provide information and to gather the views of identified stakeholders. Page 20 includes a response pro-forma which can be returned to either Bedwas Junior School, Rhydri Primary School, or the local authority.

We look forward to receiving your views on the proposal.

Samantha Graf
Chair of Governors
Bedwas Junior School

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Chair of Governors
Rhydri Primary School

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The Proposal

The Governing Bodies of Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools propose to use the powers granted to it by the Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 to establish The Federation of Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools.

The governors of both Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools have consulted with the Local Authority (Caerphilly County Borough Council) and all parties are in support of the proposal.

The aim of the Federation is for the schools to work in partnership to:

- develop the excellent shared practice that guarantees outstanding experiences and increased opportunities for pupils and staff
- develop the common goals and reflective approaches to teaching and learning that will ensure that both communities benefit from a quality education.

This will ensure significant positive outcomes and improved standards for all.

The term 'Federation' describes a formal and legal agreement by which the schools involved work together in formal partnership under a single governing body. The existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body with strategic oversight of both schools.

The proposed name of the Federation is 'The Federation of Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary Schools'.

If the proposal is accepted, the Federation will come into being on April 2019.

Background

Attainment and achievement at Bedwas Junior School has steadily improved in recent years. There is an established, effective leadership team and a committed staff with a shared vision for the school. This has impacted positively on standards in teaching and learning.

In September 2013, Rhydri Primary School was placed in special measures by Estyn following an unsatisfactory inspection. During this period, standards of learning and the quality of provision continued to decline. In addition, the school was faced with a number of challenges with regards to staffing which resulted in high absenteeism for teachers and the school leadership team. The school was also faced with an increasing deficit budget.

As a result of the above, both schools have worked on a collaborative basis since 2015 and have shared a Headteacher. This resulted in a successful Estyn inspection in July 2015 where Rhydri Primary was considered to have made significant progress and therefore no longer needed to be identified as a school in special measures.

This collaborative approach remains in place and continues to impact positively on both schools.

Bedwas Junior School is an English Medium, 7-11, mixed, community school.

The school characteristics (2017) are as follows:

Capacity	173
Admission Number	43
Pupils on roll (September 2017)	157
School budget per pupil	£2816
Free School Meals (FSM) – 3 year average (2015-2018)	15.4%
Pupil Teacher ratio	22.0
Attendance during the year	95.2%
Pupils achieving the expected level in the core subjects at key stage 2	95.9%
Support Category (2018)	Green

Bedwas Junior School is a categorisation green support category. This means it is a highly effective school which is well run, has strong leadership and is clear about its priorities for improvement. This school has a track record in delivering excellent outcomes for their pupils and have the capacity to support other schools to do better.

Rhydri Primary School is an English Medium, 3-11, mixed, community school.

The school characteristics (2017) are as follows:

Capacity	91
Admission Number	13
Pupils on roll (September 2017)	75 (plus 13 nursery)
School budget per pupil	£3565
Free School Meals (FSM) – 3 year average (2015-2018)	2.1%
Pupil Teacher ratio	17
Attendance during the year	96.7%
Pupils achieving the expected level in the core subjects at key stage 2	100%
Support Category (2018)	Yellow

Rhydri Primary School is now categorised in the yellow category, showing significant progress.

The two schools are located only 2.9 miles apart.

The two schools are moving towards a shared ethos, the leadership team has the support of the staff of both schools who are working to raise standards.

By entering into a federation, the two schools can work together under shared leadership to utilise their strengths to improve standards across the federation and together address areas in need of improvement.

By federating under one governing body, the climate of trust, openness and willingness to work together that already exists can be further enhanced. The governing body will ensure there is fairness in the share of the budget allocated to each school.

Federation (Wales) : A Summary

Policy :

The Welsh Government's policy objective is to promote collaboration between all parts of the education system to improve outcomes. School federation is a more formal way of extending collaboration and promoting closer working relationships.

Legislation :

The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Summary :

The federation of schools is a legal process which enables schools (between two and six) to work together through a formal structured process by sharing a governing body that will make decisions in the best interest of all the schools, staff and pupils in that federation.

The most important reason for considering federation must be the benefits such an arrangement would bring for children and young people in the federating schools by enhancing educational provision.

A federation can provide a foundation for sustainable long term development and improvement.

To be successful, federation needs to be based on a commitment to work as a group of schools and a willingness to do things differently for the added benefit of all pupils, their well-being and achievements.

One of the advantages of federation is that schools that federate remain in their communities and keep their individual identity. However the existing governing bodies will be dissolved and replaced by a new, single governing body which will have oversight of, and equal responsibility for, the work of all schools within the federation.

The membership of a governing body for a federation of schools is almost identical to the membership of an ordinary governing body with all stakeholders being represented although there is more flexibility in the proportions of representation of each category of governor. This means that a governing body of a federation can choose a constitution and membership which suits their particular circumstances as long as they have a minimum of 15 governors and no more than a maximum of 27 governors and adhere to the minimum and maximum numbers of governors set out in the regulations.

Schools in a federation will also be able to maintain their own delegated budget, name, character, school uniform and ethos, but will be able to explore the advantages of sharing resources such as facilities, IT, staff, school buildings etc.

A decision to federate by either schools or LAs will not override the need for a LA to intervene or act on school improvement or school organisation issues.

Key facts:

There will be a single governing body with strategic oversight of all schools within the federation.

Each school retains its name, category, budget, staff and remains in its community.

Each school can retain its headteacher if it wishes although if a single headteacher and deputy headteacher post is created to manage all of the schools in the federation, those posts do not have to be advertised nationally if one of the headteachers or deputy headteachers expresses an interest in the post.

Each school has its own Estyn inspection, though increasingly these are co-ordinated to happen at the same time for all schools within the federation to minimise stress and disruption.

The governing body of a federation can use budget, resources and staff across the federation to improve the educational outcomes for all pupils.

An audit trail must be kept and separate accounts produced for each school in the federation.

The governing body of a federation cannot require existing staff to work across all schools within the federation, but they can negotiate with the school staff unions over whether flexible contracts can be introduced.

New staff can be appointed to work across schools in the federation.

Consultation Process

It is a statutory requirement to seek the views of stakeholders on federation proposals, whether the federation has been proposed by the respective school governing bodies or the LA.

This document represents the responsibility under The Federation of maintained Schools (Wales) Regulation 2014 to consult with appropriate stakeholders.

The main purpose of this document is to provide information and to gather the views of identified stakeholders.

The Governing Bodies will seek the views of the following stakeholders :

- Pupils, staff, governors and parents/guardians of both schools
- Parents/guardians of Bedwas Infants School
- Teaching and support staff associations

The consultation document will also be distributed to the following :

- Bedwas High and St Martins Comprehensives and their feeder Primary schools
- Local CCBC Members *
- Local Town and Community Councils *
- Local and Regional Assembly Members *
- Member of Parliament (Caerphilly constituency)
- Local CCBC Libraries *
- CCBC Youth Forum
- ESTYN
- Catholic Diocesan Board of Education
- Community groups using either school premises.

A copy of the proposal will also be published on the Council's website.

A copy of the proposal will also be available for inspection at all reasonable times at both schools in the proposed federation.

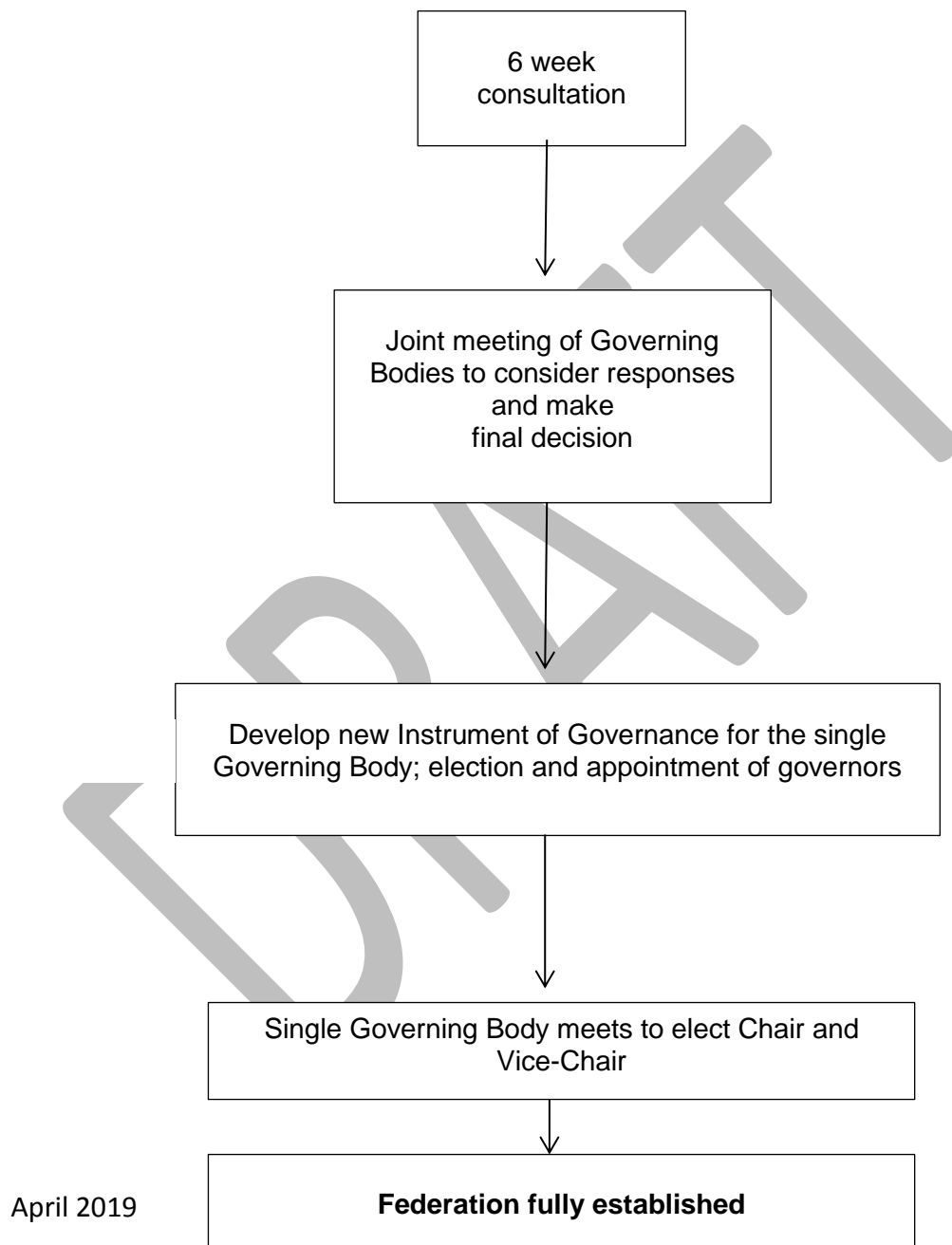
The comments received from the consultation process will be reported to the governing bodies and local authority for determination.

The consultation period for this proposal will be 6 weeks from XXXXXXXX (to be agreed by each governing Body)

During this period, you may express your views in writing to Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ty Penallta, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7PG, or by completing the response form on page 20 and returning to the above address or e-mail to spraggj@caerphilly.gov.uk

The timeline for the proposed Federation is shown in the following diagram:

(Timeline to be agreed with Governing Body)



Admission Arrangements

The admission arrangements for each school will remain unchanged. The Local Authority is the admissions authority for each school. Parents will apply for a place for their child at the school of their choice, not at the Federation, as each school in the federation is a separate school. If the child is not given a place in the school they choose, a separate application will have to be made to attend a different school. This is the case even if the second school applied for is the other school in the federation.

Composition of the Current Governing Bodies:

	Bedwas Junior School	Rhydri Primary School
LA Appointed	3	0
Headteacher	← 1 →	
Teacher	1	1
Staff	1	1
Parent Governor	4	3
Community Governor Appointed by Community	1	2
Appointed by GB	1	0
Total	11	7

The benefits of federation:

- Consistency of teaching and learning methodology, especially cross-phase.
- Streamlining of policies and structures.
- Sharing of good practice, preparation materials and resources.
- Enhanced opportunities for pupil activities.
- Enhanced opportunities for staff professional development.
- Increased opportunity for middle management development.
- Schools have options to choose a senior leadership structure to suit their circumstances leading to easier recruitment of staff and headteachers particularly if there have been difficulties.
- Opportunities for school leadership beyond a single school.
- Opportunities to maximise resources and professional expertise and achieve financial efficiencies from economies of scale.
- Promotes the broader welfare of students by offering potential for bringing together pastoral, health, careers, youth and other services to meet their all-round needs.
- Support for schools in difficulty. Schools with strengths can contribute to the learning of others.
- Supports school improvement by enabling schools to draw on the resources of other schools to tackle problems, share expertise, raise expectations and address the needs of particular groups of pupils.
- Possible easier recruitment of governors with fewer governor vacancies.
- Small schools in particular can additionally benefit by: Developing networks for personal support. Sharing expertise and resources. Organising professional development. Arranging joint pupil activities

Keys to a successful federation

- Building of trust between LAs, governors and school communities which is fundamental to the success of federations and must be fostered at every level of management.
- Commitment of time and resources from all schools involved.
- Shared vision and a common purpose of what needs to be done and how for improving attainment and achievement at all level.
- Shared identity between schools e.g. geographical proximity and having common aims on curricular and non-curricular activities
- Clear leadership and management structures.
- Sufficient time for all parties to be at ease with the proposed changes.
- All to feel like equal partners.
- Sense of ownership of process by the schools.
- Good communication with parents and staff over the changes brought by federation.

Challenges of federation

Some of the challenges to taking forward a Federation are as follows:

- Building trust between governors and school communities;
- Need to ensure full commitment from all schools involved;
- Need to develop and agree a shared vision for the school;
- Need to ensure clear governance and leadership structures;
- Need to ensure sufficient time for all parties to be at ease with the proposed changes;
- All partners should feel equally valued;
- Increasing the workload of governors, particularly during inception and first year of establishing a Federation;
- Potential loss of experienced governors;
- Operational issues - increased workload for a single headteacher;
- Estyn inspections – currently, Estyn inspects each school within a Federation separately.

For a Federation to succeed, it is imperative that trust is developed between the governors and individual school communities. It also requires full commitment from the schools involved and a shared vision for the development of the Federation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What is a Federation?

A federation is a legal governance structure where between two and six schools share a single governing body. The schools will retain their individuality, their own name, ethos, budget and school uniform but could share resources, facilities and good practice.

Q2. Why should schools federate?

Working together through a single governing body structure enables schools to raise standards and maintain local education provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise, and facilities and sharing best practice. A single governing body also provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources, including staff and budgets, release capacity in the senior management team and gain economies of scale and efficiencies.

Q3. What are the benefits of federation?

Federation will allow schools to more easily :

- extend the breadth and quality of provision
- respond to pupils' wider needs
- facilitate the release of our strongest school leaders teachers and governors to assist poorer performing schools
- widen opportunities for staff professional development
- deliver greater value for money.

Q4. Why might small schools benefit from federation?

Federation can help small rural primary schools to remain sustainable within their communities. The shared governing body provides an effective and accountable mechanism for schools to pool resources and staff, gain economies of scale and efficiencies that enable them to remain viable. Smaller schools in more rural and isolated areas could also gain as federation could open up opportunities to share management, governing body responsibility and curriculum expertise. For small primary it would allow them to deliver an enriched primary education by for example, sharing a specialist language teacher or drama teacher.

Q5. What are the benefits and risks of Federation?

There are a number of benefits for schools from being within a federation including broader learning and social experiences for children leading to improvement in pupil performance. Schools will be able to share resources, best practice, facilities and expertise. There can be further emphasis on strategic leadership and management structures, and staff will have new opportunities to work together and reduce isolation. Duplication of effort can be avoided and there is an opportunity to promote better economies of scale.

Some of the risks include the potential organisational difficulties in providing a curriculum across a number of schools. Communication with parents and staff at different schools may present a challenge. Travel costs may be higher if staff and pupils move between schools to meet curriculum needs. There may also be relationship and trust issues for governors, headteachers and staff working across schools. The federated governing body should be aware of the potential risks and have strategies and actions to mitigate them.

Q6. Will my school lose its identity within a Federation?

Schools within a federation will not lose their individual identity though they will share a single governing body. The schools retain their separate legal status and have their own budget allocations and will be subject to their own Estyn Inspection. The schools will also remain in their community and retain their own character, name, ethos and school uniform. Whilst each school receives and must account for its own separate budget, there is scope, through the single governing body, to use pooled budgets across the schools in the federation. Federation works on the basis that all schools have their own particular strengths and advantages, whether it is facilities, staff or resources.

Q7. What are the Inspection arrangements for Federated Schools?

Estyn's document 'When will the next school inspection take place?' sets out guidance on inspecting federated schools. The Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 require Estyn to inspect maintained schools every six years and produce an individual report for each school. This would also apply to schools in the federation. Estyn cannot move a school inspection to later than six years but may carry out inspections in a way that the schools in a federation are inspected in the same term, especially where the schools have the same headteacher. Estyn would also consider requests from a governing body or LA to inspect schools in the same term. Estyn would also try to ensure that the inspection teams for the schools in a federation have overlapping membership.

Q8. What happens to staff within a federation? Will their Conditions of Service change?

In a federation, all staff would be employed on the same conditions of service as now and by the same employer. Whoever is the employer of staff will continue to be the employer under the contract of employment. For community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nursery schools, the LA is the employer under the contract of employment although the governing body of the federation retains responsibility for certain staffing functions i.e. staff grievance, capability, redundancy, staff disciplinary and dismissal matters and appointments. The governing body is the employer under the contract of employment for staff in voluntary aided and foundation schools.

Combined strategic and financial planning should mean that jobs can be better protected in any combined period of contraction and that specialist staff can be used to best effect, recognising that all support and teaching staff have specialist skills and knowledge. Staff would be able to learn from each other within a coherent approach to deliver professional learning communities that use data and the National Model to focus on school improvements that link to national priorities and their school development plans.

The governing body of a federation would also be able to appoint new staff to work within all schools in the federation. This could include the appointment of a single headteacher with responsibility for all the schools in the federation, or the appointment of a Bursar or person with financial management skills and/or business management skills to oversee the non teaching aspects of the federation business.

Q9. Can a federation have a single headteacher with responsibility for all the schools in that federation?

Yes, if that is what the schools wish to have and this might be a viable option in a federation of small rural primary schools. Where this option is chosen for a larger federation of up to six schools, i.e. a secondary school and its feeder primary schools where each of those schools has a large number of pupils, governing bodies and local authorities should consider how this arrangement could be managed and any support structure a single headteacher might require. For example, consideration could be given to implementing a management structure that addresses the individual needs of each of the schools whilst also supporting curriculum continuity across the federation. This could mean having staff in each school whose purpose is to focus on teaching and learning supplemented by a structure of posts that work across the federation, all of which would be managed by a single headteacher.

Another option governing bodies and local authorities may consider is for the federating schools to retain headteachers in each of the schools instead of appointing a single headteacher.

From a day to day operational perspective schools may wish to adopt a third option which would be to appoint a head of the federation and retain a headteacher in each of the schools. If this arrangement was agreed, from a governance perspective only, the overarching headteacher in charge of the federation, if such an appointment is made, would be a member of the governing body. If no such appointment is made the headteachers of all the schools may be governors.

Q10. Would the 'headteacher' with overall responsibility for the federation be responsible for managing headteachers of each school in the federation if that is the agreed structure? .

The governing body may choose to appoint a single head of the federation with full responsibility for all of the schools in the federation and have only a senior teacher or deputy headteacher in charge of each school. If the teacher in charge is not a qualified headteacher carrying out the full range of statutory duties of a headteacher, then the head of the federation would be responsible for the performance management of those staff. The governing body would be responsible for the performance management of the head of the federation.

Q11. How should heads of federations be paid?

Following a recommendation from the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) the Department for Education in England is currently updating the Teachers' Pay and Condition document to reflect interim payments for head teachers who take responsibility for more than one school.

Q12. Are parent governors elected by the parents from their school only or from parents across all schools in the federation?

The proposal for federation should state the number of parent governors from each school which in law is that every school must have at least one parent governor elected by the parents (or appointed by the governing body if no parent stands for election), at that school but no more than two parent governors per school. It is reasonable therefore that once a decision has been made as to how many parent governors each school would have, the parents of only that school should vote in the parent governor elections. If the decision is that a school should have two parent governors each, and no parents in a particular school stand for election or only one parent stands for election, the federated governing body may appoint parent governors in accordance with Schedule 2 of the 2014 Federation Regulations. This means that the governing body could appoint a parent of a registered pupil at the school; or the parent of a registered pupil from another school in the federation; or the parent of a child of compulsory school age (or under compulsory school age for a nursery school).

Q13. Can a Federation be time-limited?

A federation should be seen as a long term commitment and not as a quick fix. The LA or respective governing bodies will have considered in depth the benefits and risks of establishing a federation in relation to the impact on children and young people's achievements. A federation would put in place strategic and operational plans to insure the sustainability and development of the schools. That will require medium to long term planning. Nonetheless, the 2014 Federation Regulations do allow individual schools to leave a federation and for a federation to be dissolved.

Q14. What are the differences between school federation and school mergers?

If two schools merge they may remain open in their community but they become one multiple site school with a single name, governing body, headteacher, ethos, budget, character and school uniform. In a merger there would only be one headteacher and it is possible there would be redundancies or staff would have to re-apply for posts in the new single school. In a multi site schools the LA could also close one of the school sites and transfer the pupils to the other sites without the need to go through statutory proposals.

In a federation, the schools remain open in their communities but they also retain their own individuality, name, ethos, character budget and school uniform. Staff would also keep their jobs and may have wider opportunities for further professional development by working across the schools in the federation. Headteachers may also remain in post although some federations may only have a single headteacher. Schools in a federation can be closed as part of school organisation proposals but the LA would have to apply the statutory proposals process to do this.

Q15. What may influence schools in deciding whether to merge and become a single school or federate?

The LA may have long term plans for school organisation within their area and schools would need to consider these and discuss with their LA, which option is more beneficial for them and fits in with the LA's overall plans.

Q16. Should we be working collaboratively as a first step with schools we may be thinking of federating with?

If you work collaboratively with other schools it may help you to create trust between the schools and will enable you to foster a good working relationship which will make it easier for the schools to take the next step and federate. Federation will be successful where the staff and governors are committed to working together for the benefit of the school communities.

Q17. Can schools establish a joint governing body before formally federating?

No – the governing body of the federated schools comes into being on the date the federation comes into force which must be at least 125 days from the date the federation proposals are published (or 100 days if small schools are being federated). This means that the governing bodies of the schools that are federating will have to have held elections for the core governors i.e. parents, teacher and staff and the LA will have to have appointed their LA governors. On the date the federation comes into force the newly constituted single governing body can meet and appoint their community governors. The schools may however set up a joint working group or committee of governors to oversee the federation process if they wish.

Q18. Can we change the name of the school and or give all the schools in the federation the same name?

One of the key drivers and benefits for federation is that schools do not lose their individuality, name and identity and remain as separate establishments. The names of all the schools in the federation will appear on the new instrument of government as well as the name of the federation. The process for revising the instrument of government and changing details such as the names of the schools is set out in the Government of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2005. The LA and the governing body should reach an agreement on the proposed changes. If they cannot the final decision rests with the LA who will want to ensure that any changes are not misleading.

All schools in a federation must retain their individual reference number and budget and it could become quite complex and confusing if all the schools decided to change their name and adopt a single name when they have to account for separate budgets.

DRAFT

Response Form

Proposal to Federate Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary Schools

Please note that we will make any comments that you make publicly available as part of the subsequent report. You are not required to provide your personal details. All the information you provide will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Please provide your comments on the proposal to federate Bedwas Junior and Rhydri Primary schools:

Alternatively, you may wish to indicate which of the following most accurately reflects your views:

I do not feel strongly one way or the other

I support the proposal

I do not support the proposal

Print Name: _____

Category of respondent (e.g. parent) _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ E-mail: _____

Once completed, please return to:

- **Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Ty Penallta, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7PG. Email Spraggj@Caerphilly.gov.uk**

The closing date for responses is XXXXXX